

Amendments to Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for sterilizing articles, comprising:
a chamber for receiving articles to be sterilized;
a heater for heating liquid in said chamber to form steam;
a pressure sensor in communication with said chamber; and
a control mechanism, wherein the pressure of steam inside said chamber is sensed by said pressure sensor, and said control mechanism maintains the steam at a predetermined pressure until an end of a sterilization cycle;
wherein at least two pressure sensors are provided, each said pressure sensor operable to select different predetermined pressures.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said heater is adapted to be cycled on and off by said control mechanism during the sterilization cycle to maintain the predetermined pressure of steam.

3. Canceled.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said pressure sensor is a valve operable at a predetermined pressure.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the chamber is capable of receiving a predetermined volume of liquid.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said control mechanism includes a timer.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein said timer is operable by a user of the apparatus.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a vent valve to vent said chamber at an end of the sterilization cycle.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising a liquid collection reservoir connected to said vent valve.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a temperature selection switch operable by a user of the apparatus, said selection switch controlling said predetermined pressure.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of sterilizing articles comprising the steps of:
providing a sterilizing apparatus having a chamber, a heater, a pressure sensor and a control mechanism;
placing articles to be sterilized in the chamber;
supplying liquid to the apparatus
heating the liquid to form steam;
sensing the pressure of steam inside the chamber, wherein when a predetermined pressure of steam inside the chamber is attained, the control mechanism is activated to retain the steam at the predetermined pressure of steam until a sterilization cycle is completed; and
selecting the predetermined pressure of steam from at least two predetermined pressures.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the heater is cycled on and off during the sterilization cycle to maintain the predetermined pressure of steam.

13. Canceled.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the liquid is supplied to the apparatus at a predetermined volume.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising venting the steam at the end of the sterilization cycle.

16. (Currently Amended) A method of sterilizing articles, comprising the steps of:
providing a sterilizing apparatus having a chamber, a heater, and a control mechanism;
placing articles to be sterilized in the chamber;
supplying liquid to the apparatus;
heating the liquid to form saturated steam;
retaining the saturated steam in the chamber for a predetermined period of time at a predetermined pressure; and
venting the chamber, whereby the articles are substantially dry at the end of a sterilization cycle;
wherein the predetermined pressure is selectable from at least two different predetermined pressures.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of retaining the articles in the chamber for a period of time at the end of a sterilization cycle to cool the articles.

18. Canceled.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein a predetermined volume of liquid is heated to form the steam.

20. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the saturated steam is heated while it is retained in the chamber in order to maintain the saturated steam at the predetermined pressure.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the heating of the saturated steam is intermittent during a sterilization cycle.

22. (Currently Amended) A method of reducing biofilm contamination in a sterilizing apparatus, comprising the steps of:

providing fresh liquid to the apparatus;
heating the fresh liquid to form steam;
retaining the steam in the apparatus for a predetermined period of time in order to
sterilize articles placed in the apparatus;
venting the apparatus;
condensing the steam to form waste liquid; and
discharging the waste liquid;
wherein the fresh liquid and the waste liquid are kept separate from one another.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the steam is retained in the apparatus at a predetermined pressure.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein a predetermined volume of fresh liquid is heated to form the steam.

25. Canceled.

26. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the fresh liquid is heated to form saturated steam.